



Space Cowboy Books Presents: Simultaneous Times Newsletter

#20 December 2021

61871 29 Palms Hwy. Joshua Tree, CA 92252 - www.spacecowboybooks.com

Letter from the Editor

In this issue we bring you an interview with British Fantasy Award-nominated author Chris Kelso, conducted by guest interviewer Gabriel Hart, as well as poetry by Marie Vibbert. It's also awards eligibility season, and this newsletter is eligible for Best Fanzine. So, if you're thinking of nominating for the Hugo Awards, we hope that you will consider us. As always, we'd love to hear from you, so get in touch at spacecowboybooks@gmail.com

Jean-Paul L. Garnier



Your new collection Vistas compiles seven short stories that really show your range under the sci-fi umbrella. Is there any kind of subtext or theme that threads these stories into this book, or are they representative of a recent time in your life?

I suppose the binding thread is in the title, 'Vistas' - a view from an elevated perspective,

which does link in with my most recent projects that explore the idea of heterotopias. I've always been interested in studying the flora and fauna of different worlds so I wanted to offer a snapshot of various landscapes, different from the ones we perceive in our everyday reality. The vista might be a floating freighter-ship arrowing aimlessly through space, equally it could be set in Glasgow, albeit a Glasgow skewed through an alternative lens. I suppose that's the beauty of fiction.

As a sci-fi writer, you cast a pretty large net — which reminds us what a large corner of literature it occupies. After I read your Burroughs in Scotland biography, it really cemented you as not just a fan of the more transgressive side of sci-fi, but an authority on it as well. What was your trajectory with your absorption/education in this?

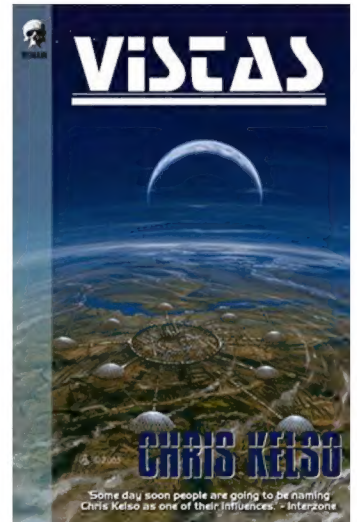
Well the first thing to say is that I think the best writers will intermingle their genres. Like Delany for example — he's a writer as comfortable writing a sociological space opera as he is a complex sexual memoir (and often the twain shall meet). Very early on I latched onto these writers who acted as great literary tutors, and invariably they existed within this notion of 'transgressive' art. Even Ellison's, 'Dangerous Visions' anthology, I feel, is a seminal transgressive text. And it was around the time of reading those great anthologies ('High Risk' for example) that I realised the custodians of the field were as important as the writers themselves, often those individuals held the dual role of writer and curator. My trajectory was very natural in this sense. I wanted to emulate or exist in the same artistic sphere as writers I grew up admiring.

You're maddeningly prolific — even as a fan of your work I struggle to keep up with your output. Is this high-volume by design, or do you merely find it hard to contain your ideas? Do you set goalposts through the years?

It's just a product of my design, for sure. I experience these intense creative emissions, seem to get them inexplicably published, then I'm customarily left in a pit of self-loathing. The simple fact of the matter is that as soon as something is published I instantly hate it. I want to dash it from existence. The creative spurt that birthed it seems like some fevered psychosis. Where I irrationally created something worthless and stupid and unaccountably saw value in it. Yet I am compelled to get the next piece published and I'm motivated by my desire to improve on, or even undo, the work which predated it.

Earlier this year you released Interrogating the Abyss, a hybrid compilation of your essays, poetry, and interviews with subversive pop-culture luminaries as your subjects. What came first, your literary or journalistic instinct? How do you balance the two?

I suppose it was journalistic, as I received formal training and have worked in this field before I had much fiction published. As a result I became dismissive of non-fiction and journalism. Oddly this attitude has completely flipped. I find it challenging to read or write much fiction and creative non-fiction seems like a ceaseless fountainhead of opportunity. I suppose I like the 'creative' side of non-fiction and this is my way of marrying the two. I think non-fiction can still be experimental and imaginative. Interrogating the Abyss was an experiment — I wanted to ask how my literary heroes got through the day with the crippling burden of consciousness weighing them down.



You're also in Preston Grassman's new Out of the Ruins apocalypse anthology with some huge names — Clive Barker, Samuel Delaney, Emily St. John Mandel, and Charlie Jane Anders to name a few. What can you tell us about your story?

It's actually a story I wrote with Preston called 'Like the Petals of Broken Flowers'. It's set in ancient Japan, features vengeful gods and is quite unlike anything else I've written prior. I think it could be expanded into a longer novella but it's great to feature in a Titan book with so many incredible names. The fact I collaborated with a writer I love means the story is still readable and of worth to me. It's a piece I could actually recommend.

You're just about to have your first child. How has the experience forced you to reflect on a human's place in Creation? What new concepts have been forcing old ones out as you give life to a sentient being?

This is a good question. I just read Ligotti's, 'The Conspiracy Against the Human Race' and I decided on two things – 1. I'm not going to impose my inherent pessimism onto my daughter, and 2. As long as she's happy, I'll be happy. I'll let her know that it's not necessary to think or behave in a cynical fashion, despite the fact her father has devoted a large chunk of his life to producing nihilistic art. Her sentence is the meniscus through which conscious life attributes meaning to the surrounding environment. It can be a thing of great beauty, as well as an unwilling intellectual microscope which extracts intense existential horror. I see a lot of joy and meaning in the world. If she wants to work in a fast food chain all her life but is happy doing it, then power to her.

Since you're also a teacher, what advice might you have for a young writer just starting out?

Hmm, these questions are difficult so I'll quote Jeremy Robert Johnstone, a writer I love who has better advice to give than I do (and he actually gave this advice to me on my blog series, 'Words from the Wise' – 'Expect nothing from a writing career, but appreciate anything good that comes your way. Stop in that moment—first short story sale, first good reading, first time you don't want to kill yourself after reading a final draft—and look at it and be grateful. Buy yourself a beer and a burrito and just be happy for a second before worrying about whatever the next thing has to be (and dodge the search for too much outside validation, as this can turn an actual achievement into a bummer). Writing is a career which features wildly intermittent reward, so recognize those tiny moments and ride that wave for as long as you can. It may help you through the horse latitudes.'

Poetry by Marie Vibbert

Infernocrusher

Brass gears 'neath which electric rapture rose,
Your arms with teeth to crunch all selfish flesh,
Their strength made weak and gravity beguiled
By science brought alive, my mind's own child.
In wet gas fire the haughty world enclose,
With thy worm-pump the filth make fresh.
Now lift ye pistons, crank ye shafts
Thou creature of engineer's craft
Lay waste and reap the hearts of all mine foes!

Dragonrider

The heat is out,
My family is jagged—
Slivers of sulk and knife-point glances,
Cutting elbows,
Bowling to the living room space heater.
Mom rocks in a flannel cocoon
Spitting words at us like needles.

I go up to the arctic to crawl
Into a cardboard box. I
Pull my comfort in after--
Flashlight and blanket and I
Fall into words.
My face warm at last
Under an alien sun
I hear the leathery beat of dragon wings.

New from the Small Press

Emanations: When a Planet was a Planet, the ninth volume in the Emanations anthology series.

The ninth volume of the critically acclaimed Emanations literary anthology series, *Emanations: When a Planet was a Planet* presents stunning new art, illustrations and writing from around the world. The forty-two contributors represent South Korea, Canada, India, Oman, France, Nigeria, England, Scotland, Germany, Spain, the Philippines, Sweden, Japan and the United States. Comprising a broad range of graphic and literary expressions, this new volume wonderfully sustains International Authors' commitment to innovation and experimentation, with unusual visual pieces, intriguing artists' statements, idiosyncratic memoirs, dynamic poetical constructions, and cutting-edge speculative fiction.



The book features the work of: Andrew Darlington, Michael Moorcock, Ebi Rober, Shashi Kadapa, Philip Murray-Lawson, C. E. Matthews, Elkie Riches, Dale L. Sproule, David Flynn, Gareth Jackson, Jean-Paul L. Garnier, Adam Paxman, Tim Newton Anderson, Michael Butterworth, Carter Kaplan, Horace Jeffery Hodges, Mack Hassler, Denny E. Marshall, Ana Cameron, Oz Hardwick, Darwin Holmstrom, AE Reiff, Mario Murgia, Adrian Nehard, David Flynn, Marielle Risse, Peter Dizozza, Daniel De Cullá, Bienvenido Bones Bañez, Jr., ughVitasta Raina, Richard Kostelanetz, Nobxhiro Santana (Nobuhiro Mido), Francine Perlman, Hugh Macrae Richmond, Marilyn R. Rosenberg, Don Tinsley, David Nadeau, Christopher Arabadjis, Arthur Lee talley, Tessa B. Dick, Michael Beard, & Richard Glyn Jones



At First Contact By Janice L. Newman

Hugo Finalist Janice L. Newman presents a touching trio of romances in a speculative vein. From the edge of space, to the shadows of the paranormal, to the marvels of the mystic:

At First Contact: A germaphobe and an android are assigned a mission to survey a planet together. Will they discover new life or a new love?

Ghosted: Leo is searching for the soul that used to haunt his grandmother's house. Did Will ghost him?

A Touch of Magic: What if love could alter the fabric of existence? A fraught romance between two teachers just might be helped along by a touch of magic.

Find many of the books mentioned in our newsletter
at our online shop www.bookshop.org/shop/spacecowboybooks